

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. A method of crediting an account of a network access
2 node, comprising:
3 receiving a data signal at the network access node;
4 forwarding the data signal wirelessly to a network user
5 node; and
6 providing account crediting information to an
7 accounting system, wherein the account crediting information
8 represents a credit to be recorded for an account associated with the
9 network access node.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the network access
2 node is a repeater.
- 1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the network access
2 node is further part of an ad hoc network.
- 1 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the network access
2 node is an access point.
- 1 5. The method of claim 4, wherein the data signal is
2 received from a public telephone.
- 1 6. The method of claim 1, further comprising providing
2 account debiting information to the accounting system, wherein the
3 account debiting information represents a debit to be recorded for an
4 account associated with the network user node.

1 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising providing
2 second account crediting information to the accounting system,
3 wherein the second account crediting information represents a
4 second credit to be recorded to an account associated with the
5 Internet service provider and the data signal is provided by an
6 Internet service provider.

1 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the network user node
2 is a portable, handheld device having a display.

1 9. The method of claim 1, wherein the credit is based on
2 the forwarded data signal.

1 10. The method of claim 9, wherein the credit is based on
2 at least one of the time of day and airtime usage of the data signal.

1 11. The method of claim 9, wherein the credit is calculated
2 on at least one of a per-packet basis and a flat rate basis.

1 12. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of forwarding
2 includes transmitting the data signal using a wireless local area
3 network (WLAN) protocol.

1 13. The method of claim 12, wherein the WLAN protocol is
2 the IEEE 802.11 protocol.

1 14. A portable device configured as a repeater, comprising:
2 means for receiving a data signal wirelessly;
3 means for forwarding the data signal wirelessly to a
4 network user node; and
5 means for providing account crediting information to an
6 accounting system, wherein the account crediting information
7 represents a credit to be recorded for an account associated with the
8 portable device.

1 15. The portable device of claim 14, wherein the portable
2 device is configured to operate in an ad hoc network.

1 16. The portable device of claim 14, further comprising
2 means for providing account debiting information to the accounting
3 system, wherein the account debiting information represents a debit
4 to be recorded for an account associated with the network user
5 node.

1 17. The portable device of claim 14, further comprising
2 means for providing second account crediting information to the
3 accounting system, wherein the data signal is provided by an
4 Internet service provider, wherein the second account crediting
5 information represents a second credit to be recorded to an account
6 associated with an Internet service provider.

1 18. The portable device of claim 14, wherein the credit is
2 based on the forwarded data signal.

1 19. The portable device of claim 18, wherein the credit is
2 based on airtime usage of the data signal.

1 20. The portable device of claim 18, wherein the credit is
2 calculated on a per-packet basis of the data signal.

1 21. The portable device of claim 14, wherein the means for
2 forwarding includes a wireless local area network (WLAN)
3 transmitter.

1 22. The portable device of claim 21, wherein the network
2 user node is a portable device.

1 23. An accounting method for crediting an account
2 associated with a network access node, comprising:
3 receiving a communication event message, wherein the
4 communication event message includes identification data
5 representing a network access node, wherein the communication
6 event message is received in response to the network access node
7 receiving and forwarding a data signal on behalf of a network user
8 node; and
9 crediting an account associated with the network
10 access node based on the communication event message.

1 24. The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the
2 communication event message further includes the number of
3 packets in the forwarded data signal.

1 25. The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the
2 communication event message further includes the duration of a
3 communication between the network access node and the network
4 user node.

1 26. The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the
2 communication event message is received in response to the
3 network access node repeating the data signal in an ad hoc network.

1 27. The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the
2 communication event message is received in response to the
3 network access node acting as an access point.

1 28. The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the
2 communication event message includes second identification data

3 representing the network user node, further comprising debiting an
4 account associated with the network user node.

1 29. The accounting method of claim 23, further comprising
2 crediting an account associated with an Internet service provider,
3 wherein the data signal is provided by the Internet service provider,
4 wherein the communication event message includes third
5 identification data representing the Internet service provider.

1 30. The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the
2 network access node receives and forwards the data signal via a
3 wireless local area network (WLAN) protocol.

1 31. A method of crediting an account associated with an
2 access point, comprising:
3 receiving a data signal at the access point;
4 forwarding the data signal wirelessly to a network user
5 node using a wireless local area network (WLAN) communication
6 standard; and
7 providing account crediting information to an
8 accounting system, wherein the account crediting information
9 represents a credit to be recorded for an account associated with the
10 access point.

1 32. The method of claim 31, wherein the data signal is
2 received from a public telephone.

1 33. The method of claim 31, wherein the data signal is
2 received from the Internet.

1 34. The method of claim 31, further comprising providing
2 account debiting information to the accounting system, wherein the
3 account debiting information represents a debit to be recorded for an
4 account associated with the network user node.

1 35. The method of claim 31, further comprising providing
2 second account crediting information to the accounting system,
3 wherein the data signal is provided by a data source, wherein the
4 second account crediting information represents a second credit to
5 be recorded to an account associated with the data source.

1 36. The method of claim 31, wherein the network user
2 node is a portable, handheld device having a display.

1 37. The method of claim 31, wherein the credit is based on
2 the forwarded data signal.

1 38. The method of claim 31, wherein the credit is based on
2 airtime usage of the data signal.

1 39. The method of claim 31, wherein the credit is
2 calculated on a per-packet basis.

1 40. The method of claim 31, wherein the wireless local area
2 network protocol is the IEEE 802.11 protocol.

1 41. An access point, comprising:
2 a receive circuit configured to receive a data signal;
3 a transmit circuit configured to transmit the data signal
4 over a wireless local area network (WLAN) to a network user node;
5 and
6 an accounting circuit configured to provide account
7 crediting information, wherein the account crediting information
8 represents a credit to be recorded for an account associated with the
9 access point.

1 42. The access point of claim 41, wherein the receive
2 circuit is coupled to a public switched telephone network.

1 43. The access point of claim 42, wherein the data signal is
2 received from an Internet service provider.

1 44. The access point of claim 43, wherein the account
2 crediting information represents a credit to be recorded for an
3 account associated with the Internet service provider.

1 45. The access point of claim 41, wherein the wireless local
2 area network operates according to the IEEE 802.11 standard.

1 46. The access point of claim 41, wherein the credit is
2 based on the transmitted data signal.

1 47. The access point of claim 41, wherein the credit is
2 based on airtime usage of the data signal.

1 48. The access point of claim 41, wherein the credit is
2 calculated on a per-packet basis.

09871111099101

- 1 49. The access point of claim 41, wherein the accounting
- 2 circuit is further configured to provide account debiting information,
- 3 wherein the account debiting information represents a debit to be
- 4 recorded for an account associated with the network user node.

1 50. A system for crediting an account associated with a
2 network access node, comprising:
3 a network access node configured to provide a
4 communication link with a network;
5 a network user node configured to provide a wireless
6 communication link with the network access node; and
7 an accounting system configured to credit an account
8 associated with the network access node based on a communication
9 between the network user node and the network.

1 51. The system of claim 50, wherein the network access
2 node is a repeater configured to provide a wireless communication
3 link with an access point coupled to the network.

1 52. The system of claim 50, wherein the network access
2 node is an access point coupled to a network, wherein the network
3 includes a public switched telephone network.

1 53. The system of claim 50, wherein the accounting system
2 is further configured to debit an account associated with the remote
3 node based on the communication between the network user node
4 and the network.

1 54. The system of claim 50, wherein the network user node
2 is a portable handheld device having a display.

1 55. A wireless communication module for a public
2 telephone coupled to a public switched telephone network,
3 comprising a wireless local area network (WLAN) transceiver circuit
4 configured to provide a wireless communication link between the
5 public switched telephone network and a network user node.

1 56. The wireless communication module of claim 55,
2 further comprising a tamper-resistant casing surrounding the
3 transceiver circuit.

1 57. The wireless communication module of claim 55,
2 further comprising a digital subscriber line (DSL) circuit configured to
3 communicate between the public switched telephone network and
4 the transceiver circuit.

1 58. The wireless communication module of claim 57,
2 wherein the transceiver circuit is configured to communicate with
3 the network user node pursuant to the IEEE 802.11 standard.

1 59. A method of adjusting at least one of an account of a
2 first person associated with a network access node and an account
3 of a second person associated with a network user node,
4 comprising:
5 receiving a data signal at the network access node;
6 forwarding the data signal wirelessly to the network
7 user node; and
8 providing account adjustment information to an
9 accounting system, wherein the account adjustment information
10 represents at least one of a credit to be recorded to the first person's
11 account and a debit to be recorded to the second person's account.

1 60. The method of claim 59, wherein the network access
2 node is a repeater.

1 61. The method of claim 60, wherein the network access
2 node is further part of an ad hoc network.

1 62. The method of claim 59, wherein the network access
2 node is an access point.

1 63. The method of claim 59, wherein the account
2 information represents a credit to be recorded to the first person's
3 account.

1 64. The method of claim 59, wherein the account
2 information represents a debit to be recorded to the second person's
3 account.

1 65. The method of claim 59, further comprising providing
2 second account information to the accounting system, wherein the
3 second account information represents a second credit to be
4 recorded to an account associated with the Internet service provider
5 and the data signal is provided by an Internet service provider.

1 66. The method of claim 59, wherein the network user
2 node is a portable, handheld device having a display.

1 67. The method of claim 59, wherein the credit is based on
2 the forwarded data signal.

1 68. The method of claim 59, wherein the step of forwarding
2 includes transmitting the data signal using a wireless local area
3 network (WLAN) protocol.

1 69. The method of claim 68, wherein the WLAN protocol is
2 the IEEE 802.11 protocol